

Better than Gold.

**Better than grandeur, better than gold,
Than rank and titles a thousand fold,
Is a healthy body and a mind at ease
And simple pleasures that always please;
A heart that can feel for another's woe,
With sympathies large enough to enfold
All men as brothers, is better than gold.**

**Better than gold is a conscience clear,
Though toiling for bread in an humble sphere,
Doubly blessed with content and health,
Untoed by the lusts and cares of wealth,
Lowly living and lofty thought**

**Better than gold is the sweet repose
Of the sons of toil when the labors close,
Better than gold is the poor man's sleep,
And the balm that drops on his slumbers deep
Bring sleeping draughts on the downy bed,
Where luxury pillows its aching head,
The toiler simple opiate deems
A shorter route to the land of dreams.**

**Better than gold is a thinking mind,
That in the realm of books can find
A treasure surpassing Australian ore,
And live with the great and good of yore,
The sage's lore and the poet's lay,
The glories of empires passed away;
The world's great dream will thus unfold
And yield a pleasure better than gold.**

**Better than gold is a peaceful home
Where all the fireside characters come,
The shrine of love, the heaven of life,
Hallowed by mother, or sister, or wife,
However humble the home may be,
Or tried with sorrow by heaven's decree,
The blessings that never were bought or sold
And center there are better than gold.**

A Lesson in Obedience.

She was all alone!

It was quite a new experience to Dotty, this housekeeping business, she had theorized a good deal over "Handy Housekeepers," "Comprehensive Cook-Books" and "Home-Guides," but she had never had any practical experience before. And now, up in these wild woods, the helm of domestic affairs was unexpectedly placed in her hands, and hers alone.

She liked the woods and the river; the meadows all starred with daisies; and the long, low farmhouse, with its red brick chimney-stacks; its trellises all bending with the weight of vines; the old stone-walled garden, where ripening currants hung like ruby fingers, and the green gooseberries seemed to absorb the very sweetness of the sunshine into their translucent hearts.

To her mind it was a deal nicer than the city-flat, with the milkman yelling, the hand-organ droning, the everlasting clouds of dust. And to-day, when Aunt Themis wanted to go to hear her favorite elder hold forth at camp-meeting, Dotty volunteered to stay and get the dinner for Reuben and Rankin, her two tall cousins.

"La, child!" said Aunt Themis, "you don't know nothin' about cookin'."

"But indeed I do," asserted Dotty. "I can make a chicken-fricassee as well as you, Aunt Themy. I watched the way you did it last Saturday; and I know I can turn out a first-class cherry tart."

"Well," said Aunt Themis, a little doubtfully, "anyhow, there's plenty of good rye-bread and new milk, and nobody needn't starve on that. And be sure, Dotty, you keep the doors bolted, and don't let tramps in, and don't forget that brood of young turkeys in the barn chamber, and blow the dinner horn at twelve precisely; and don't on no account leave the milk-room door open, for that new cat is the thievingest creeter you ever did see."

"Oh, I'll take care!" said Dotty, with the reckless audacity of ignorance. "Everything shall be quite—quite right! You'll see, Aunt Themis."

And after the old lady had departed, with many misgivings, Dotty drew a long breath of rapture, and executed an impromptu dance in the middle of the kitchen floor.

"Only think!" she said, addressing the cat in the corner—"the whole house all to myself! Won't I get a superb dinner for Reuben and Rankin? I'll make a meringue tart, and ice cream, and vanilla puffs, and chocolate cake, and I'll try my hand at mock-turtle soup, and cream candy, and black coffee! And how I will surprise them! And as for bolting the doors, how utterly ridiculous it would be to shut out the beautiful sunshine, and the butterflies, and the sweet scented air! This house always smells like blue mould when Aunt Themis is here; and of course nobody could get in while I am here!"

So Dotty skimmed the pans for cream to make the ice cream, and stirred up the vanilla puffs, and grated chocolate for the cake, and put the two fat, little white chickens into the pot for the fricassee; and then, feeling herself every inch a housekeeper, she frisked away up stairs to make the beds.

But there was no question of beds, when once she was up stairs, where a huge old chest of some dark-stained wood stood open, near the landing.

"The old oak chest!" cried Dotty, who was full of romance as a white-clover blossom is of sweetness. "And to think that Aunt Themis never let me look into it before!"

There was nothing very particular, after all, in it. Only stuffy-smelling blankets, a moth-eaten gown or two, the brass buttoned military coat in which Uncle Amaniah—dead these ten years—had been wont to "rally" on training days.

"Pshaw!" said Dotty. "There ought to have been a forgotten will there, or a skeleton, at the very least. It's a humbug, that old chest."

Just as this reflection passed through her mind, a whining, nasal voice sounded at the bottom of the little wooden stairway, which wound up like a corkscrew from below.

"Any old clothes to exchange for beautiful china vases, lady? Any old victuals for a poor man?"

He was a stalwart, black-browed fellow, with villainous, slit-like eyes, and a tattered velvet-reen suit; and Dotty's heart stood still with terror for a second.

"Oh, if she had only obeyed her Aunt Themis and locked up those doors!"

"No!" she said, shortly. "Go away." "Don't be hard on a poor fellow, miss!" whined the man.

And Dotty was quite certain that she saw the spout of Aunt Themis' old solid silver cream jug protruding from the flaps of his ragged velvet-reen pocket. At the same moment, he began ascending the stairs with insolent deliberation.

In an instant all the doubts, the dreads, the possibilities, the horrors of the situation, glanced across Dotty's mind.

Reuben and Rankin were in the distant meadow cutting grass; the tin horn, by means of which she usually summoned them, was hanging up down stairs at the back of the kitchen door.

Not a neighbor lived within sight or ear! And here she was at this steady faced brute's mercy. Would he gag her? Would he murder her? What was to become of Aunt Themis' gold beads and Reuben's new breast-pin, besides all the nice old silver which had descended to them from Grandmother Bluff?

"No," said Dotty to herself; "for myself I do not care. But the silver shall be protected!"

With a quick glimpse of inspiration, she advanced toward the shambling fellow with the sinister face.

"There are some old garments in that big chest," said she. "You may look at them; perhaps they will be what you want!"

The eyes of the sinister man, who had by this time reached the top of the stairs, glistened. He promptly advanced, and bending over the side of the monster chest, peered into its depths.

"Most anything'll work in my trade," said he. "I ain't no yastickler, because—"

Now was Dotty's time. As he bent over, with at least two-thirds of his body in the old chest, she sprang alertly forward, and bundled the other third into the stuffy recesses.

The tramp dropped like a huge overgrown kitten into the flannel blankets. In a second, Dotty had the lid shut down, and had turned the key.

"Now I've got you!" said Dotty, all triumphant, though dishevelled. "Oh, yes! kick and pound all that you like, but you'll not get out until Reuben and Rankin are here!"

And flying down stairs, she seized the old tin horn and blew a blast which echoed like the "Horn of Roncevalles" over hill and dale.

Reuben, swinging his scythe on the side hill, stopped to listen, Rankin dropped his whetstone, and Miles Ruggles, the hired man, cried out:

"Je-ru-salem! it ain't twelve o'clock yet!"

"There's something up, anyhow!" cried Reuben, making a grasp at the linen coat which hung on the nearest tilberry bush.

"Mother ain't home, and Dotty is all alone!" exclaimed Rankin.

"Wal, ef there's anything extraordinary on the carpet," declared Miles, "I ain't a-goin' to be left out in the cold."

Up hill and down dale, over log-bridged streams and across hummocky swamp hastened the three brave recruits, without loss of time, and rushed, all abreast, into the kitchen door.

Dotty stood there, with the broom in one hand, and a sauceman of boiling water in the other, pale but resolute.

"Dorothy!" cried Reuben, "what on earth is the matter?"

"He's up stairs!" gasped Dotty.

"Who is up stairs?" demanded Rankin as he reached down a loaded revolver from the very top shelf in an odd little three-cornered cupboard.

"And I think he's kicking through the side of the chest," faltered Dotty, clinging to Rankin's arm.

"Je-rusalem!" again remarked Miles Ruggles, under his breath.

"Who?" persisted Reuben. "What chest?"

"The burglar!" said Dotty. "He's in the old chest up stairs. I tipped him into it. And, oh, I was so afraid afterward that he would suffocate to death, because he was so still for a minute or two!"

"Astonished, maybe," suggested Miles Ruggles, under his breath. "I should a-been, I know."

"But when he began to kick," said Dotty, with a little gasping breath, "and swear, I knew he was all right."

"I should think so!" said Reuben, with a lowering brow. "How did the villain get in, Dotty?"

"I—left all the doors open," confessed Dotty, with a conscience-stricken air.

"Aunt Themis told me not to; but I thought there was no harm. And I had hardly got up stairs, when he came shuffling up, and I saw the old silver milk jug in his pocket. He wanted old clothes; and I told him we had some in the chest; and when he stooped over to look, I just pushed him in."

"Brave little heroine!" said Rankin.

"And locked it tight," nodded Dotty.

"The best thing you could have done," declared Reuben, admiringly.

"Je-rusalem!" commented Miles Ruggles, smiting the kitchen table with one horny palm.

So up they proceeded, in solid phalanx, and released the velvet-reen captive, who was very sullen and completely bathed with perspiration, in consequence of the vain efforts he had made to get free.

"Come!" roared Reuben, who was a young giant of six feet odd inches, and broad proportionately, as the miserable prisoner scrambled out and stood cowering before them, "what are you doing here?"

"Old clothes in exchange for china vases!" he faintly stammered.

"Then what are you doing with our silver milk pitcher and ten forks in your coat pockets?" demanded Reuben.

"And what the Je-rusalem business hev you a-prowlin' round and scarin' the women folks?" said Miles Ruggles, coming valiantly to the front. "Here, Rankin, I'll get up the old one-hoss wagon—your ma's got the shay—an' cart the feller off to Justice Gilliland's. He'll settle him in quick time, I tell ye what. Jest tie the fellow's hands, and make him all ship-shape. That's all I ask of you!"

So the sinister scoundrel, in black velvet-reen, was borne unceremoniously off by stout Miles Ruggles, as the first stage toward a two years' captivity in the nearest states prison; and Dotty was relieved at last from the incubus of his presence.

First she laughed at Rankin's idea that she was a heroine, and then she cried and shuddered at her vivid perception of the terror she had endured. "But, Reuben and Rankin," she said, "you must promise—solemnly now—never to tell Aunt Themis that I disobeyed her and left the door open."

And the two young men bound themselves solemnly ever to keep the vow of eternal silence upon the subject.

"Since there is really no harm done," said Reuben, laughing.

"Except Dotty's fright," said Rankin, quite seriously.

So the chicken fricassee was made, and the vanilla puffs; but the ice cream was postponed indefinitely, and the chocolate cake remained forever a disembodied ideal. And it took the two young men all the afternoon to console Dotty.

And when Aunt Themis came home, full of the preacher, and the brethren, and the camp meeting, they all listened in dutiful silence, and she never once mistrusted that anything had happened.

"But I'm sure," whispered Dotty to Rankin, when they went out together to get a pail of spring water, "it will always be a lesson in obedience to me."

—Helen Forrest Graves.

A Mongol Characteristic.

With many good qualities, and with almost a superabundance of religion, the Mongols have no love of truth, and are wont to despise a man who cannot meet the stress of daily events by an apt lie. On one occasion, traveling with a guide over the desert, Mr. Gilmour was frequently asked whether he carried a revolver. He constantly made the truthful reply that he did not. This so aroused the fear and excited the indignation of the guide that his employer's sad state became a matter of deep thought, resulting in this solution. He suggested that to all future queries Mr. Gilmour should reply, "Supposing I have, what then? Supposing I have not, what then?" The canny Scotch wit of the missionary led him to learn a lesson even from a Mongol. "I saw no harm in this form of answer, agreed to use it, and have often since staved off in the same manner impertinent questions."

THE OSTRICH.

Queer Habits of Peculiar Bird—How the Ostrich is Hunted.

A letter to the New York Times describes the ostrich farm at Anaheim, Cal. Dr. Sketchley, owner of the farm, on which there are twenty-one birds, said to the writer:

"They lay eggs every other day. Age does not affect them. I have seen a pair of birds which were 82 years old and they were just as valuable for breeding and feather raising as ever. Were they decrepit? You could not tell the difference in any way between them and very much younger birds. I have known birds 30 years old, a pair, valued at £1000. You can see the chances here. If the birds are in proper condition I expect that we shall have 600 chickens in a year. The difficulty in ostrich farming is in raising the chickens. They catch cold. But when they are over a month old they are all right. Ostriches have no disease that I know of, and I have had eight years' experience with them. When a chicken is 6 months old the value of its feathers is about \$10; when it is 14 months old the value is between \$20 and \$30, and when the bird is between 3½ and 4 years old the value is about \$250 annually. Sixteen years ago the business of ostrich farming was begun; now \$40,000,000 are invested in it."

An ostrich is apparently about the most ill-tempered bird in existence. They never acquire a fondness for any one. They have no particular preference ordinarily as to mating. They are always on the lookout to kick some one, and if the kick has the intended effect it is pretty sure to be fatal. The blow is aimed forward, and is accurate. For this reason the person who pulls the stocking over the ostrich's head at the time when the feathers are to be cut must be wary and experienced. As Dr. Sketchley walked along by the corrals, of which there are about a baker's dozen, the ostriches, with a few exceptions, followed along with an evident desire to get a kick at him. A Chinaman carrying a scythe along by one of the corrals was at once an object of provocation to the ostriches in that corral and of fear to Dr. Sketchley. The latter tried to make the Chinaman understand that there was danger to the precious birds from the scythe should they kick through. The birds, when they found that the Chinaman was out of their reach, lay down in the dust of the corral and, rocking violently from side to side, beat their bodies with their heads with all their available force, which from the sound seemed to be considerable. It was such a sound as might come from a muffled drum. Having indulged in this outbreak for awhile, they stalked about with that peculiar gait, which seemed to be their property in common only with the camel or dromedary; then they again lay in the dust and repeated the drumming operation. Dr. Sketchley succeeded in catching one by the neck, but did not hold it. He also put his hand into the mouth of one to show that it had no strength in its jaws. Their diet is mainly alfalfa and barley, with cabbage, turnips, and potatoes thrown in as a sort of ostrich dessert. The diet would alone indicate the lack of strength in the jaws. Before they reach that culmination of anger which results in the prostration and drumming, they emit a loud hiss like a goose, opening the mouth to such an extent as to look like a letter V lying on one side and stretched very wide apart. The danger is all from the one-toed feet, with the obviously prodigious muscle of leg and thigh to propel them.

A striking difference exists between the corralled and farmed ostriches and those running over the African deserts, inasmuch as the latter never fight. Dr. Sketchley hunted for nine months in the desert. The birds have to be hunted scientifically. Certain facts are known, one being that the birds will always run in a semicircle. First they will run with the wind, that they may use their wings to help them. After they get what the sailors call "a head wind," they go around the other way. They must be run down. One horse cannot "wind" them. The great trouble is to keep them in sight. They will run 40 miles on a stretch. If they ever get a breathing spell they will get away. The hunter starts out with a fresh horse. A Bushman boy rides another and leads one. As soon as it is seen which way the bird will run, the boy takes his cue and drives to where he thinks the hunter will need the fresh horse. In the meantime the ostrich singled out for the chase and the hunter are speeding along like the wind, the latter straining every nerve to keep in sight of the bird and the bird making its most prodigious strides for freedom. A great deal now depends on the Bushman boy's judgment, in having the fresh horse at the right place, that no time may be wasted. It

is seldom that the boy makes a mistake. The hunter leaps on the fresh horse and gains on the bird, which, growing tired, goes more and more awkwardly. The hunter has only, when he catches it, to rap it on the head with his hunting whip and the chase is over. There are really only two kinds of ostriches, the North African and South African birds. The males are black and the females drab. All are of one color, drab, until after they are two years old.

One of the most singular features is the location of the ostrich's stomach. He carries it on his back between his shoulders, and the food can be seen winding around inside of his neck to get at this out-of-the-way receptacle. Although there is a great deal of chafing against the corrals in case of fright, the plumage, for which alone the birds are of value, does not seem to suffer much. All of the flock appear to be in fine feather. The plumage is soft, silky, clean, and glossy as it grows, and is all ready for market. Speaking of the relative value of the birds, Dr. Sketchley said that, while one might yield more feathers or prove a better breeder, he averaged them. The value is determined mainly by breeding qualities. The ostrich is considered a chicken until it is 12 months old, a feather bird only until about 3½ years old, and at 4 years it should breed. The most valuable breeding birds are called "guarantee birds," from the discovery that their eggs will hatch. The average life is supposed to be about 100 years among long-lived birds. These birds are now between 8 and 9 years old. Should they live and the experiment prove successful, Southern California may yet contain thousands of ostriches.

How One Novel was Written.

Wilkie Collins writes most of his novels with his own hand, but now and then rheumatic gout gives him such a pain that he cannot hold a pen, and then he employs an amanuensis. The greater part of "The Moonstone" was dictated, and Mr. Collins says it is the only one of his works which he has never read. The recollection of the agony he suffered while dictating it deters him. "For a long time, while that book was writing," he says, "I had the utmost difficulty in getting an amanuensis who would go on with his work without interrupting himself to sympathize with me. I am much like a beast in many ways—if I am in pain, I must howl; and, as I lay in the bed in the corner yonder, I would often break forth in a yell of anguish. Then my amanuensis would urge me to compose myself and not to write any more. Between the paragraphs I would go along nicely enough, having in my mind just what I wanted to say, and these interruptions would drive mad. Finally a young girl, not more than seventeen, offered to help me, and I consented that she should, in case she was sure she could let me howl and cry out in my pain while she kept her place at the table. She did it, too, and "The Moonstone" finally came to an end. But I never read it—never."

A Man Superior to his Fate.

A man who had by dint of sheer courage and energy overcome almost insuperable difficulties, and showed that life, even when it seems almost a curse, may be well worth living, died last week at Arare, in the canton of Geneva. Jean Trottet, the man in question, was born in 1831, without hands and without feet. His short arms were pointed, and his legs such as they were, not being available for progression, he was able to move only by twisting his body from side to side. His case greatly interested the surgeons of the neighborhood, and local Barnums made the parents, well-to-do peasants, many tempting offers to turn their child's misfortune to account by exhibiting him about the country. But these offers were invariably declined, and when Jean was old enough he was sent to school.

In writing he held his pen at the bend in the elbow, and as he grew older he took great interest in husbandry, became an active haymaker, used the reins with dexterity, and was so good a shot that he often carried off first prize at the village fairs. He enjoyed, too, some reputation for sagacity, was consulted by his neighbors on matters of importance, and has left behind him a widow and four children amply provided for.

She Never Did.

"I can't carry this bundle," said a wife to her husband. "I can't," the husband replied, "for I have to carry the two children." "But you ought to have some consideration for me," the wife continued. "You must think I'm a wagon." "Oh, no, my dear, I don't think you are a wagon. A wagon holds its tongue, but you never do."—Arkansas Traveler.

CHILDREN'S COLUMN.

Filial Devotion of a Bird.

We have a saying that charity begins at home, and it has been added that a great deal of the charity that begins at home stays there. Of this narrow sort of benevolence, too, we find examples among the animals. There is the barbet, for instance. It is a solitary bird, and sits most of the time in morose silence on a twig, waiting for its food (in the shape of an insect) to fly by. Sometimes it is said to rouse itself and make a descent upon the nest of some smaller bird, and eat all the little ones.

The celebrated naturalist, Levaillant, who has told us so many interesting things about the birds of Africa and South America, says that he discovered a barbet's nest in which there were five birds. Four of them were young and vigorous, but the fifth was so old and weak that when it was put into a cage with its comrades it could not move, but lay dying in the corner where it had been placed.

When food was put into the cage, the poor old bird could only look at it longingly, without having the strength to drag itself within reach of it. Then it was that one of the younger birds manifested a singular spirit of kindness. Quickly, and even with an air of tenderness, as it seems, they carried food to the decrepit old bird, and fed it as if it had been only a fledgling.

There are several different species of barbets found in Africa and South America, and though not graceful in shape, many of them are exceedingly beautiful in plumage. They get their name of barbet from the French word *barbe*, meaning beard, because they have tufts of stiff hair at the base of the bill. Naturalists place them in a genus called *Bucco*, and some persons call them puff-birds, because they have an odd way of puffing out the feathers all over the body, which then looks more like a bale of feathers than a bird.—*St. Nicholas*.

A Touching Incident.

"Do birds think?" Let me tell you of a bird I once owned. The little bird was a female mocking-bird who had a nest of young ones about a week old. The baby birds were never healthy, inheriting weakness from their father, who had the asthma. Early one morning I was awakened by the mother bird standing on my pillow pouring into my ear the most mournful notes I ever heard. I knew something was wrong and arose at once. The mother flew to her nest, then looked to see if I was following, which I was. As soon as I reached the nest she took hold of one of the baby birds' wings, pinched it gently with her beak and watched it eagerly, I think, to see if it moved. Then she took hold of one of the little feet and pinched it in the same manner, and, finding it did not move, she looked up at me in a pleading way, as if she wanted me to try to awaken them. I reached my hand out toward the nest. She stood aside and looked on with as much interest and feeling apparently as any young human mother.

"I examined the lifeless little bodies, and when I withdrew my hand the mother hastened to hover over the little ones, seeming to think that if she could warm them they would awaken. In a few moments she hopped off the nest, looking at her babies, held food close to their mouths and coaxed and called them, but in vain. She flew all around the room, as if in search of some untried remedy. Several times she perched on my shoulder, and looked so distressed and pitiful I could scarcely keep from crying. I put her in a cage, and hung her in the sunshine to see if she would become quiet. She took a bath, but still remained nervous and seemed anxious, and by and by grew so restless I had to let her out of the cage and let her go to the nest again.

"She stood quite a while looking at her dead children. Then she went ever all the little bodies—pinching them gently and watching them closely to see if they moved. When she saw no signs of life she seemed puzzled. She seemed at last to make up her mind the little ones were dead. And one by one she lifted them tenderly in her beak and laid them side by side in the middle of the room. She looked at them lovingly a moment, then flew to her empty nest and gazed wonderingly into that. Finally she perched on my shoulder and looked into my eyes, as if to ask, 'What does all this mean? What a lesson of love and devotion that little bird taught? She always fed the little ones before taking a mouthful herself, and she would stand coaxing them to take one more mouthful, and finding they had enough would swallow it herself.'—*Chicago Times*.